

KC-135 Stratotanker maintenance crew
prepares aircraft for departure to support
RIMPAC exercises

U.S. Air Force/Jacob N. Bailey



AN INTERVIEW WITH **Samuel J. Locklear III**

Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, USN, is the Commander of U.S. Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii. He was interviewed by *Joint Force Quarterly's* William T. Eliason.

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JFQ: *President Barack Obama and other officials have called for an increased focus on your command's area of responsibility [AOR] in recent years. Can you describe what you have called a "rebalance" of security strategy and policy in terms of how this change in strategic focus will affect U.S. Pacific Command [USPACOM]?*

Admiral Locklear: The strategy that the President put out last year could not have been better timed. The strategy was a byproduct of discussions we were all having about what happens to the U.S. military—the joint force—as we go forward into the future after what we believe will be the conclusion of more than 10 years of war in the Middle East. Our forces have to be very much appreciated for the magnificent work they have done there under some difficult challenges and environments. To some degree it has shaped our joint force in a way that might not be the best for what we see as our emerging interests in the 21st century. So what this rebalance represents is a hard look at where the interests of the United States are and what will concern our children and grandchildren most in the future. Every vector pointed to the Asia-Pacific and, in fact, the Indo-Asia-Pacific in significant ways where not only our security interests will be at stake but our economic interests, too. That's kind of where this started. So I was lucky to come into this job with that kind of guidance.

It is also fortuitous because of big decisions being made in our government about the size of discretionary spending and the future of defense spending. I have to leave those decisions to the political leaders, who are working on them as we speak. This rebalance perspective will hopefully provide the guideposts for decisions we make about how we reshape the military into probably a smaller but more lethal, more agile, more technologically capable one best positioned to support U.S. global interests, many of which will be in the USPACOM area.

There are several aspects to this. One is about employing new concepts regarding improving our capabilities across a broad spectrum of traditional and nontraditional mission sets. It points out the need to strengthen our alliances; we have only seven treaty allies in the world, and five of those are in the USPACOM AOR. We are also working on building partnerships with key nations such as India and Singapore. We are building

a partner relationship with China that some people find surprising, but I believe it is in our best interest to do so, especially from a USPACOM perspective, in order to achieve our desired endstate. Through the rebalance

Muslim countries. It also has the smallest country in the world. It has 7 of the 10 largest armies in the world. It has the largest navies in the world. It also has the highest propensity for natural disaster.

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we'll be able to strengthen the security architecture and frameworks in this vast and complicated region, ultimately ensuring a security environment that protects U.S. citizens and U.S. interests, provides necessary support to our allies and our partners, and withstands any challenges we might face. For instance, the USPACOM AOR is full of large natural disasters; this year alone I think we are on super typhoon number 26 or 27. The average is about 16. We are seeing more of this type of event, which will put large population centers at risk. If those population centers are at risk and cannot be managed by the security environment, they have a tendency to make the environment unstable. As we move forward on the scale of events that can occur, the security environment must be able to endure such shocks to the system, including territorial disputes, nationalistic perspectives from nations as they pursue their interests at the expense of others (security interests), or the security environment. Therefore, the endstate is to create a future in this vast part of the world that has the ability to ensure that American interests are secure.

Interestingly, the USPACOM area—if you consider only the Pacific Ocean—is the largest object on the face of the Earth. If you look at a map, you would not see it that way because maps distort the true appearance of the world. You could take every land mass in the world, including Greenland and Antarctica, and put them in the Pacific Ocean and still have room for another African continent and another North American continent. I don't know if most people recognize that fact. There are 3.6 billion people in the USPACOM AOR. The area stretches from the coast of California to the border between India and Pakistan and running basically north to south. In addition to a population of 3.6 billion, the area has the world's largest economies. It has the world's most populated countries. It has the world's most populous

The United States, as a Pacific nation, has significant interests in this Indo-Asia-Pacific environment now and for the foreseeable years and decades to come, so the strategy is designed to ensure that we can help create a security environment that protects these interests.

JFQ: *Assuming there will be continuing pressures on the global economy and more reductions in the Federal budget, can you discuss what measures you are considering in terms of force structure and operations within your command area of responsibility?*

Admiral Locklear: I think we will have the joint force, and our civilian leadership will have a discussion in earnest over the next year or so about what the future force structure should look like in the military. We are already being affected by that to some degree by continuing resolutions and sequestration, but I don't want to spend a lot of time on that because I think they are near-term issues that we will get through; on the other side, it will be just another factor in determining what our joint force will look like. But there are several underlying aspects of the USPACOM AOR that I think have to be recognized.

Because of its size, there remains a tyranny of distance. In the cyber domain, the space domain, and in some cases the air domain, distance is not as significant because the ability to move and transport things globally has greatly increased during my time in the military. But the tyranny of distance still affects certain aspects of what we do in this region, particularly concerning maritime security. Because it entails the difficulties of moving and providing logistics support of forces as they try to remain forward, maritime security represents a huge feature in our AOR, and it puts a premium on forward presence. Moreover, I think it will for some time to come. So whatever our



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Admiral Locklear visits People's Republic of China

force structure will look like when we get through this period—and I hope our next Quadrennial Defense Review will address some of these issues—there has to be an understanding of the importance and significance in having a number of assets forward in the Asia-Pacific: 1) to demonstrate U.S. commitment to the region, 2) to create the ability to partner day-to-day with those allies who mean the most to the United States, and 3) to provide a deterrent or calming perspective. Ask any nation in the USPACOM AOR if it can imagine the Pacific without U.S. military presence; I have yet to find one that claims it would want to imagine such a scenario. So the value of that forward presence and the type of assets that we put forward will be important.

We are advocating in that forward presence that these forces be the most capable and the most highly trained. Because of the growth of militaries and the investments we are seeing in military capabilities in our AOR, some of the most highly technical capabilities will be developed in this

region and probably proliferated to other regions of the world. Therefore, it is important that the assets we do put forward are the best and that they keep pace with potential threats. We must make sure that these forces are capable when faced with a human disaster threat, a terrorist threat, a threat to the maritime environment, or perhaps a destabilizing event in the region that would lead us to conflict. They cover a lot of areas. It's not about ships and airplanes and submarines and ground forces. It's about cyber capabilities. It's about space capabilities. It's about information operations.

If you take a realistic look at the rebalance, USPACOM military forces are only one component of the effort. The rebalance uses a whole-of-government approach. It has to do with economic, diplomatic, and law enforcement efforts, and drug and counternarcotics trafficking and the flow of human capital, among other issues. We want to make sure that USPACOM forces, once we come to the end of our decision cycles about what our force is going to look like, will be

relevant to the current security challenges we face in the region and those we expect to face in the future.

JFQ: *What steps have you taken in your first year to orient your staff to account for this rebalance proposition? Why were these changes, if any, necessary, and what do you hope to gain from the effort?*

Admiral Locklear: Any time you receive guidance from the Commander in Chief that you should put a finer point on or refocus your effort, it requires staffs to take a hard look at what they do. To begin, we had to educate ourselves on what we thought were the compelling aspects of the rebalance to ensure that USPACOM strategy was consistent with the President's strategy.

We did a full review. We looked at the emerging threats we would have to deal with in the security environment in the region. We looked at how we were structurally organized to work more closely with our partners from the interagency [community].

And we made some moves to beef up our staff's capability and capacity to achieve that by bringing in more interagency folks. I also took a look at this staff, which has been historically made up of U.S. personnel only, and we're making some changes to bring a more international perspective to the group. In the coming months, I expect to see more general and flag officers and staff officers from our partners arriving who wish to participate. I believe this broadens our perspective and improves the quality of the way we think through our role here in the Asia-Pacific. I've taken a look at the internal workings of the staff and, without getting into a lot of detail, we need to make sure that it is manned and equipped to be able to look across the AOR and manage what we can from a [military-to-military] perspective including the day-to-day shaping and security operations that ensure we remain in a peaceful environment rather than one of conflict.

From my perspective, peace in the Asia-Pacific for decades to come will allow the same things that happened in the last 60 years to happen for the nations in the region to enjoy peace and prosperity. So we're going to make sure that we spend as much time thinking and working on the success piece as we do on the failure piece. The failure piece would be if you have to get into a conflict. But rest assured that if somewhere down the road we find ourselves in conflict, we will be properly organized and equipped to be predominant.

JFQ: *Given your recent efforts to engage with the People's Republic of China through activities such as the RIMPAC [Rim of the Pacific] exercise, in what ways do you plan to reassure allies and partners who might be concerned about what they see China becoming?*

Admiral Locklear: Personally, I think that the invitation to RIMPAC for the Chinese was overdue. In and of itself, the invitation is a reassuring activity. When I consider the USPACOM AOR and I speak to our partners, they understand that the rise of China will have an impact on the AOR. We understand that, too. A nation can go from being a prospective Third World country to an economic superpower in just a few decades without it having an impact on the economic environment, social environment, or security environment. The USPACOM community of nations in the



Admiral Locklear visits Republic of the Philippines

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Indo-Asia-Pacific has an opportunity to do what we can to help ensure that the rise of China happens in a productive way in which China emerges as a positive member of a security environment or a positive contributor to the security environment rather than a potential adversary.

Every country in the AOR recognizes that it is not in their best interest for an adversarial relationship to exist between them and China or between the United States and China. Therefore, we are looking not only at RIMPAC but also across the spectrum to determine how we encourage engagement between our allies, partners, and ourselves with China. RIMPAC is just another step in this process.

We've had fits and starts over the years regarding our relationship with China. Its leadership, for instance, would not agree to use the [military-to-military] relationship as a first move toward security cooperation. From my perspective, that decision was counterproductive for the security environment, and from what I have observed over the last year, we are making a lot of progress in not allowing that to happen again. By working with our allies and partners in building a partnership with China, managing the competition between two potential economic superpowers—certainly powers that have a global security impact—in a way that assures success is important to all of us.

We have invited the Chinese to RIMPAC. I hope they come. I hope they come ready to participate fully and be integrated into the great work that we do there. And I expect that all the other partners who participate in RIMPAC will welcome the Chinese just as we welcomed the Russians this past year, which worked well. We hope that the Chinese bring great ships to Pearl Harbor and join in the festivities that are associated with RIMPAC. It's hard to build relationships with people you don't know. Having China participate in what is easily the largest naval exercise in the world—42 nations participated last year—instead of remaining outside RIMPAC looking in can only be good.

JFQ: *What are your thoughts about developments in the last year on the Korean Peninsula? Do you see an opportunity to return U.S. forces in the Republic of Korea to levels seen before 2001?*

Admiral Locklear: Let me talk about the developments first. I believe they will continue to be quite disturbing, at least in North Korea. North Korea continues to pursue—even under the new leadership of Supreme Commander Kim Jung-un—policies and activities that run counter to the United Nations Security Council [UNSC] resolutions, which, I think, most find reasonable. [North] Korea continues to prioritize



**USS *George Washington* (CVN 73) steams through
South China Sea, July 2012**

DOD/Paul Kelly

military spending—spending on nuclear programs and ballistic missile systems to be able to deliver them prior to the needs of its underprivileged population. This continues to be disturbing, and the road ahead of where we are going with North Korea as it continues to proliferate and continues to violate UNSC resolutions will be important not only for the United States and its allies and partners in the region—as well as China and Russia—but also the rest of the global community, especially now that it appears North Korea will be continuing its path of nuclearization.

To address your question of what the U.S.-ROK [Republic of Korea] alliance will look like, let me first say that this alliance remains a cornerstone of U.S. security perspectives in Asia and certainly on the peninsula. We continue to grow that relationship, and the capabilities of the ROK military continue to improve. Our connectivity and ability to share information and work together continue to improve, but it is not without challenges. We will go through a process here in probably the next year where we will take a look again at how we feel about the positioning of forces and agreements and where we have them and how we are supporting the people on the peninsula. Do I anticipate a large change in U.S. force numbers on the Korean Peninsula? No. If what we see in North Korea today is what we see in the next year or so, our number there will remain consistent. Unfortunately, the North Korean leadership gets a vote in all of this. If it votes poorly, then it could certainly rapidly change our view on how we would support the security situation on the peninsula.

JFQ: *How do concepts in development such as Air-Sea Battle affect your command's approach to planning and operations? Are you able to assist in their development in a way to leverage your unique environment?*

Admiral Locklear: First, I would applaud the Navy's and Air Force's efforts on Air-Sea Battle [ASB]. A lot of good work and thinking went into it. I believe we had an AirLand Battle process several decades ago that produced similar thinking. Unfortunately, ASB has been misinterpreted, particularly by some of our allies and partners, as a strategy rather than a concept. I try to explain that ASB is not a secret weapon. ASB is where smart people in smart Services come together where U.S. investments have been made in

[producing] tremendous weapons systems and linking architectures and interoperability between Services. We would ask if we can look at the emerging threat environment using our long experience in USPACOM and

combatant commands, is working quickly to establish the right supporting-supported relationships in this very dynamic environment. We are patterning our exercises to make the training realistic so we can put pressure on

I would say that the cyber enterprise in general is under-resourced based on the size and complexity of the problem

how we best can leverage the technologies and capabilities we have specifically purchased to address these issues, which I refer to as antiaccess/area-denial [A2/AD] threats. And where you can, does it point you in the direction of investments? You might need to close those seams. Or does it point you toward asymmetric advantages that you want to improve to increase your overall asymmetric advantage?

This is important to USPACOM and all of our components; we are briefed routinely on the work being done in Washington, DC, on A2/AD and ASB. We make suggestions to them because, in the end, USPACOM forces will be called on to be successful in a high-end environment, should that day ever come. Therefore, it is critical that we do all we can to solve these problems and shortfalls with the capabilities that we have already bought. No matter how we might feel about the future, the reality is that for the next several decades, the force you see today will be about 80 percent of the force USPACOM will have. We have got to make it work during an increasingly challenging environment.

JFQ: *Joint Force Quarterly has featured a series of articles on cyber operations and the need to better integrate these operations into the joint force commander's command and control. What is your assessment of the way ahead for cyber operations for the joint force?*

Admiral Locklear: Cyber operations have become a serious focus for us in the region. This particular theater is important because the tyranny of distance is heavily reliant on cyber, space, and an assurance of *access to cyber and space*. Not to consider these facts in our planning would be remiss. Right now I think we are a little behind, and we are making steps as a joint force to catch up. I was supportive of the creation of U.S. Cyber Command and remain supportive of it. U.S. Cyber Command, in conjunction with the

ourselves to ensure that 1) we can maintain access to our own networks should they ever be attacked, and then we can defend those networks, and 2) we start to look at other networks and other architectures outside of our own—how would we understand those and leverage those if necessary during a conflict to our benefit? So we've got some work to do. I would say that the cyber enterprise in general is under-resourced based on the size and complexity of the problem. I believe the joint force will move to correct some of that. I believe we are already moving in that direction. And I believe we now understand the problem and we have a way ahead. We just have to be fast enough to stay ahead of how fast the cyber world is changing.

JFQ: *You are a graduate of one of our joint professional military education colleges, then known as the Industrial College of the Armed Forces [ICAF], now the Eisenhower School at National Defense University. How well did your joint education and experience prepare you for joint assignments?*

Admiral Locklear: I have been through a fair amount of joint education over time, and I can tell you that the experience I had at ICAF was probably one of the most valuable as it related to any ability I have as a strategic thinker beyond the realm of joint warfare. The ability as a graduate to contemplate the intricacies and importance of understanding economics, logistics, and all the other aspects of national and international power that go into how I make strategic decisions has paid off multiple times. To answer your question, my joint education was exactly what I needed to aspire to be a combatant commander, particularly in the USPACOM AOR.

JFQ: *How has jointness changed USPACOM over the years, and do you see the possibility that some day the commander might be from another Service?*



Ships and submarines participating in RIMPAC 2012 sail in formation around Hawaiian Islands, July 2012

Admiral Locklear: I won't speculate on the decisions of our civilian leaders because I believe that the President and Secretary of Defense are in a good position to evaluate potential combatant commanders. My guess is that any decisions will be made on the personality and capability of the officers who are available and not so much on the uniform they wear. That said, when you look at the history of this region, it represents a significant maritime theater. A huge part of what I do here includes a large component of the maritime domain. I don't think that is going to change or that it is going to get more complex. Furthermore, the allies and partners in this region have a long historical perspective that we, as Americans, sometimes don't possess. They have been comfortable, I think, over time with USPACOM having a maritime face—the face of an admiral—so it could change and they would probably accept it, but I would just say that they are comfortable with the current situation. This issue

would be in the calculus of the decision that our civilian leadership would have to make if they should decide to change the uniform of the USPACOM commander.

JFQ: *As USPACOM commander, can you characterize your perspective of the Russian Federation regarding the security environment in the Asia-Pacific?*

Admiral Locklear: From the USPACOM perspective, we view Russia as a potential security partner. I just had a chief of defense conference that was held in Australia, and Russia's deputy minister of defense—who at one time happened to be the Eastern Flank Commander—attended and spent 4 or 5 days with us and we had good discussions and good dialogue. As I mentioned earlier, we just had Russian ships participate in RIMPAC, and that was quite successful. So I look at Russia only from the USPACOM perspective. I know that U.S. European Command

has to look at it from a different perspective, and certainly, there is another view from the larger global perspective. But from where I sit, there is benefit in having Russia participate in whatever way it can because its force levels in the Pacific are not significant compared to other places it might be, at least today. Having Russia as a productive partner in the overall security environment, particularly as we look at maritime activity that might be moving north into the Arctic, is important. In fact, the relationships we have in the region with allies and partners contribute to an overall understanding that allows us to operate with and around each other. **JFQ**



Sailor fast-ropes out of MH-60S Knighthawk helicopter during RIMPAC 2012